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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 001526

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [OVIP](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PRESIDENT OBASANJO ON U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE AU, MAURITANIA COUP, AND CARTER VISIT

REF: A. US SECRET SERVICE WASHINGTON DC 3828

[1](#)B. SECSTATE 150159

[1](#)C. SECSTATE 151355

[1](#)D. ABUJA 1479

Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Ambassador met with President Obasanjo in his villa private quarters on the morning of August 18. Poloff served as notetaker. Obasanjo supported the nomination of a U.S. ambassador to the African Union, discussed the coup in Mauritania, and welcomed the visit to Nigeria by former President Carter. End Summary.

"Will Try to Sell" Naming U.S. Ambassador to AU

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador said that the U.S. planned to create a new position of Ambassador to the African Union (AU) to be based in Addis Ababa (Ref B). Obasanjo said he would support the idea and discuss it with President Konare, Chairman of the AU Commission. He said the position would be helpful because the AU is trying to be more active, and was now meeting at summit level two times a year. Obasanjo concluded by saying he would "try to sell" the idea.

AU to Mauritania: Combat Slavery and Terrorism

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador handed Obasanjo the Department's press guidance on the coup in Mauritania (Ref C), and Obasanjo read it carefully. He said that it paralleled his own thinking. He added that he had raised two additional things with the Mauritanian transitional government: first, Mauritania must abolish slavery, and second, the country must have an aggressive anti-terrorism stance. Both of these items, he said, are "very important." He told the Ambassador that Mauritania was "one part of Africa where slavery is still going on," and it must be stopped. He said the military government could accomplish these two goals while in power, and that the AU would continue to have a dialogue with the junta. He told the Ambassador that the Mauritanian representative would be his next meeting that morning.

Interested in Meeting President Carter

[1](#)4. (C) Obasanjo said he'd heard about the upcoming visit of former President Jimmy Carter from September 11-13 (Ref A), and asked his staff to check on his travel schedule. He planned overseas trips to Mexico, Brazil, and Spain, before going to the UNGA meeting in New York in September, but he hoped to be able to meet with President Carter. (Note: His staff is concerned about the President's September travel schedule, before he goes to the UNGA. End Note.)

Biographic Note

[1](#)5. (C) The President was warm, engaged, and energetic. At the meeting with northern Governors on August 8 (Ref D), he seemed to have a low energy level, coughing and blowing his nose loudly with his microphone switched on. His cold symptoms had disappeared by the August 18 meeting, and he was in good health.
CAMPBELL